

Land is valuable. It is precious because it is finite. There is just so much of it. It cannot be increased. The City of Newark does not have a great deal of land, and what it has is, therefore, doubly precious. Unfortunately this land can be put to improper and damaging use by greedy or shortsighted or irresponsible persons and organizations.

This ordinance proposes to give land belonging to the City of Newark to an organization which has failed to use and administer effectively the properties which it already owns by virtue of gift from the City of Newark. This Council has repeatedly expressed its lack of confidence in the Newark Housing Authority. A member of this Council has stated that the Authority failed to give him a simple written answer to a simple question related to another proposed gift of land: "What do you propose to do with this land?" Instead of a simple answer, at a recent Council meeting, we heard a rambling statement by a representative of the Authority that raised more questions and answered none.

The operations of the Newark Housing Authority are now being surveyed or investigated by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Newark Authority apparently expects an unfavorable report, since it plans to hire counsel to present its side of the matter. The Chairman of the Authority approves of this expenditure, although, as she stated to the press, she is not sure what "our side" is.

Another statement by the Chairman, and repeated in the dissertation by the Authority representative, is that there is desperate need for four and five bedroom apartments in public housing. No statistics are given to support this statement. How many members of this Council have four or five bedroom homes or apartments? How many members of this audience have such accommodations? I agree that children of different sex should not share the same bedroom. But five bedrooms! Has the Authority identified more than two sexes?

What statistics do you have that support the claim that additional public housing is presently needed? Do you know how many apartments are now vacant in the Authority's projects? Do you know how many apartments are under repair to make them available for occupancy? Do you know how many units have been completely abandoned as permanently uninhabitable? I hope so, since this is some of the information you should have before making judgment on any request to give more land to the Newark Housing Authority.

On September 1, 1982, a year and a half ago, I said to this Council that reports in the press, personal observation, conversations with tenants of public housing, all lead to the conclusion that the Newark Housing Authority has continually failed to operate and maintain properly the projects for which it is responsible; that the overriding reasons for this failure are: lack of concern in members of the Authority;

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Speech to City Council

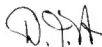
indifferent and/or incompetent management; lax, less than knowledgeable or non-existent supervision of the work force; and a lack of understanding of the elements of routine, meticulous maintenance demanded by these projects. There are already indications that the report of the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development will substantiate my statement.

In view of all the foregoing, how can this Council approve the gift of any more precious land to the Newark Housing Authority; and give it carte blanc to do whatever it pleases with it? This whole scenario sounds like something out of Alice in Wonderland, not like responsible administration of an American city. It is laughable, but, as Adlai Stephenson once said, "It hurts too much to laugh, and I am too old to cry."

It is time for all of us, citizens, Council and Administration, to approach reality. We can no longer tolerate substandard, inefficient management in any area of government. We must reject conversation and demand performance.

Keep this land until you find a use for it that will make a real contribution to the revival and future of Newark.

In any case, ordinary common sense dictates that no action be considered or taken on this ordinance or any similar ones until the report of the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the report of the \$400,000 survey by consultants hired by the Authority shall have been received and thoroughly studied.



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